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SADDAM HUSSEIN'S GRAND STRATEGY DURING THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

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**SADDAM HUESSEIN'S APPLICATION OF NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF MILITARY THOUGHT AND STRATEGY DURING THE
IRAN-IRAQ WAR**

Upon selection of the topic of the Iran-Iraq War, we initially prepared to support the position that Saddam Hussein had carefully utilized all the principles of statecraft and chose war only as his last resort. However, after careful analysis of the history of the relationship between the two countries, the events that led to the conflict, and the utilization of military strategy, the evidence led us to a different conclusion. Saddam Hussein's fear of Iran and its Shiite Revolution drove him to engage the Iranian Government in a miscalculated limited war designed to stop further Shiite ambitions against his regime. By not fully utilizing all the options of statecraft, he was forced to rely solely on military instruments of power, which proved to be incompatible with a limited style campaign against a revolutionary adversary.

Use of military force appears a natural choice for this leader, based on his background, experience and past successes. From the age of 18, he was involved in Baathist opposition activities in Iraq. In 1959, he was involved with the attempted assassination of Qasim. In 1963, he participated in an attempted Baathist coup, was put in prison but escaped. He was an underground Baathist activist constantly dodging the authorities. The Baathist Party itself was formed from the lower classes of the minority Sunni population. Historically, lower class parties that attain power tend to rule by force and intimidation. So it seems natural that the Baathist regime, headed by Saddam Hussein, gravitated to the military instrument of power to solve national security issues.

After his rise to power with Bakr in 1975, Hussein favored confrontation while Bakr advocated compromise. Even after Bakr's retirement left Hussein in control as the heir apparent,

Saddam continued his ruthless techniques by arresting and executing many top Baathist civilian and military leaders to remove any possible threats to his goal of complete leadership. The use of force has been and continues to be the standard method of operation for Saddam Hussein.

To properly assess Saddam's application of National Security Strategy, I need to first look at some assumptions about the Nation and the World. First, one must understand that the Iran and Iraq conflict was not a new development. "In the case of the Iran-Iraq War, the general precipitants may be traced to the cultural divide that has separated the Arabs and Persians since at least the seventh century, when conquering Arab armies extended Islam east of the Zagros Mountains."¹ Ethnic differences with the Kurds, the division between the Sunni and the Shiite Muslims, differences between the Baathist leadership and previous Arab nationalist regimes all add to the equation. Saddam himself was instrumental in the 1975 Algiers Accord which gave the Shaat al-Arab Waterway and surrounding lands to Iran in exchange for Iranian commitment to discontinue aid to the Kurdish rebellion in Northern Iraq.

"Between 1975 and 1979, during the rule of Shah Pahlavi of Iran, the Persian Gulf was stable. All of the countries surrounding the Gulf region were united in a single aim of maximizing their revenues through the sale of oil. The two major rivals, Iran and Iraq had resolved their differences by signing the Algiers Accord, and as long as these two states were not in conflict, continued stability was assured."² This uneasy peace was threatened when the Islamic revolution occurred in Iran. The Iranian Revolution could not have come at a worse time for Iraq. Iraq's standing in the Arab world was higher than anytime in the recent past. Talks

¹ Staudenmaier William O., *A Strategic Analysis in The Iran-Iraq War: New Weapons, Old Conflicts*, edited by Shirin Tahir-Kheli and Shaheen Ayubi (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983) p. 28.

² Pelletiere, Stephen C., *Iraq's Decision to Go to War Chapter 2 in The Iran-Iraq War: The Iran-Iraq Conflict* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992) p. 45.

with Syria were leading to a combined front against Israel, moving Iraq towards leadership in the region. “Iraq’s economy was doing wonderfully well, with the oil income expected to reach a record \$30,000 million in 1980.”³ Saddam intended to have Baghdad replace Cairo as the capital of the Arab world.

In the late 1970’s the rise of Shiite opposition to Sunni rule was becoming more evident throughout the region. It culminated in Iran with the Islamic Revolution. To give Saddam credit, he tried (at least on the surface) to use positive methods with the new leadership in Iran. He indicated his willingness to maintain relationships based on current agreements and even sent letters emphasizing his commitments. Despite his overtures, the Iranian leadership pushed for a Shiite Revolution within Iraq.

This caused a fear deep inside Saddam. He employed various means at his disposal to combat the rise of the Shiites in Iraq. He tried using carrots by improving the quality of life, touring the Shiite district of Al Thawrah, opening the Baathist Party to Shiite membership, and embracing Islam. When the carrots did not produce the desired results quickly enough, Saddam returned to his well-used sticks by imprisoning then executing, not only members of the Da’wa Party, but Baqir al-Sadr and his sister. Baqir al-Sadr was the only Shiite cleric in Iraq that could have led a revolution to overthrow Saddam Hussein’s regime. While he did try to employ non-violent tools to calm Shiites, he quickly returned to his violent tendencies when results were not immediate. Even though the dispute of the Shaat al-Arab Waterway and surrounding lands was a “sore point” with Iraq, the survival of Saddam’s power was the driving force behind Iraq’s national security strategy.

³ Hiro Dilip, *Roots of Conflict, After the Iranian Revolution*, in **The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict**, (New York: Routledge, 1991) p 38.

One of the major reasons cited for the Iraqi invasion into Iran was the disagreement over the Shaat al-Arab Waterway. Even though the Iraqi government was embarrassed and uncomfortable with the 1975 accord, the waterway was only a small factor in Saddam's decision to go to war. Iran was a real threat to Hussein and his domestic standing. His achievements since his takeover were showing improvements in general living conditions. The economy was booming. Construction was underway to host future Arab summits.

Even with these achievements, his attempts to stabilize the Shiite population within Iraq proved unsuccessful and continued to leave him vulnerable to political unrest and overthrow. He had tried many means to placate the Shiite majority in Iraq. With the revolution in Iran, however, an uprising in their sectors of Iraq seemed imminent. The only way in his mind to stop this threat was initiating war with the revolutionists of Iran. Even though Iraq's economy was flourishing, Saddam convinced himself that war would only improve his nation's economical power beyond the current state. He was counting on Iraq emerging from the Iran-Iraq war as the hegemonic power of the Gulf. Iran's threats and encouragement of the Iraqi Shiite population led him to the violent solution he was so comfortable at using. "The complex motivation behind Baghdad's action was summed up by Shahram Chubin, a specialist on Gulf security, thus: Motivated by fear, opportunism, and overconfidence; a mixture of defensive and offensive calculations, Iraq's decision to resort to force was a compound of a preventive war, ambition and punishment for a regional rival."⁴

⁴ Hiro, Dilip, *Roots of Conflict: After the Iranian Revolution* in **The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict** (New York: Routledge, 1991) p. 39.

Saddam's intelligence gathering instruments led him to believe that the time was right for a military victory against Iran. He believed that the political leadership was weak and vulnerable, allowing for a quick Iraqi military victory. At one point, he estimated that the war would last a week and result in a settlement advantageous to Iraq. He also counted on the demoralized Iranian military to be weaker than normal. The Iranian military leadership was virtually dismantled, especially in the officer corp. Iraq's modernization of its military forces through the longstanding support of the Soviet Union and the recent addition of hundreds of tanks, armored personnel carriers, frigates and corvettes, and Mirage fighters substantially improved Hussein's arsenal. He believed that he could squash the Shiite rebellion, regain some "face" by recapturing the key waterway rights and, most importantly, come out of the military action as the true leader of the Arab world.

National survival - at least the survival of Hussein's power -was a key factor in his decision to use military force. Saddam had previously attempted to counter the threats from Iran through political means by raising the Arab "flag" in the spirit of making this an Arab/Persian confrontation. He argued that Arab ideology was paramount and that any true Islamic revolution would follow this ideology. Saddam also looked at threats and opportunities among the superpowers of the Soviet Union and the United States. These superpowers were both contributing to the unrest in the region. The United States encouraged Iraq to confront Iran while Russia was having difficulties choosing sides due to Iran's displeasure with the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.

Saddam believed (prophetically) that both would be surprised by the war. He felt (justifiably) that the United States hoped he would attack Iran. The United States wanted to prove to Iran that they could not compete militarily without logistics support for the arms they

had acquired from the United States. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, could dramatically arms to Iraq may not have been resumed and the outcome of the war would have shifted to Iran's favor. Saddam did not give enough thought to the possible negative reaction of the Soviet Union to his military option. He was fortunate the Iranians were unreceptive to the Soviet Union's friendly overtures because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Using this international backdrop, I do not believe Saddam Hussein fully evaluated his foreign policy objectives and linked them to his strategies. "My final conclusion is that any nation contemplating war must be precise and realistic in determining its objectives, policy, and strategy...vagueness can be no virtue in statesman or strategists who intend to use military force to achieve their political objectives"⁵. Had Saddam fully understood his political objectives, their relationships to overall national strategy, and the monumental task he was about to attempt, I am convinced he would have reconsidered his decision to go to war with Iran. The fact that neither Iran or Iraq had been involved in this type of a war for nearly half a century coupled with the uncertainty of the revolutionary military power in Iran greatly fogged the feasibility of the military option.

From a tactical perspective, Saddam did not plan appropriately for the basic resources needed to prosecute the war. Strategically, Saddam overestimated the turmoil in Iran and underestimated the size difference between Iran (45 million people) and Iraq (15 million people). This size advantage, especially when you apply it to a fervent revolutionary regime strong on mobilization, was a major factor that Saddam failed to assess when he evaluated latent and potential power.

⁵ Staudenmaier, William O. *A Strategic Analysis in The Iran-Iraq War: New Weapons, Old Conflicts* edited by Shirin Tahir-Kheli and Shaheen Ayubi (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983) p. 47.

Saddam did utilize other policy instruments in his attempts to reduce the enemy's power and resources. He sent sabotage operations into the province of Khuzistan in hopes of provoking a revolution that would separate this portion of Iran, rich in oil, from the center in Tehran. Iraq supported uprisings in Baluchistan, Azerbaijan, and Kurdistan to promote further instability. However, the overconfidence exhibited by Saddam concerning his military strength together with the choice of a limited war against a powerful and revolutionary country, clearly depicts his mistake in properly assessing the Iranian power and resources.

Saddam Hussein did not utilize all of the tools available to him to ensure national security strategy. He did not link the political and military strategies. "Before any nation resorts to the use of force to secure its national interests, the statesman and the general must enter a dialogue to ensure that the military means are in agreement with the political ends. The most formidable strategic problems for Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq War were to ensure that political objectives, security policies, and military strategy were not congruous."⁶ Saddam did not take the time to ensure the objectives, policies, and strategies were intertwined. He made a terrible error in forgetting "that any nation contemplating war must be precise and realistic in determining its objectives, policy, and strategy. Ambiguity in any one of these factors, or a failure to integrate them properly, will certainly lead to failure on the battlefield."⁷ Instead, he resorted to his basic instinct of violence and elected to confront his fear of a Shiite rebellion and subsequent loss of power, with ruthless force. He did not examine the possible pitfalls associated with a limited war

⁶ Staudenmaier, William O. *A Strategic Analysis in The Iran-Iraq War: New Weapons, Old Conflicts* edited by Shirin Tahir-Kheli and Shaheen Ayubi (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983) p. 35.

⁷ Robbins, Phillip, *Iraq in the Gulf War: Objectives, Strategies, and Problems*, Chapter 5 in Hanns W. Maull and Otto Pick, *The Gulf War: Regional and International Dimensions* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988) p. 47.

and he neglected to fully employ all the other options of statecraft. Finally, his gross underestimation of the cohesiveness of the Iranian revolutionary government toward outside intervention made his lack of strategic vision even more hazardous.

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran in September of 1980 was based on his logic that a quick, decisive, yet limited war would compel Iran's revolutionary leaders to stop all further attempts to overthrow his regime. He assumed that fighting a limited campaign, where his army's targets and goals were restricted, would send a clear message to the government in Tehran that Iraq had no intentions on prosecuting an all out war. Unfortunately (for him), he quickly discovered that his military strategy of a limited war was not compatible with his political objectives of stopping a revolutionary adversary. There are a number of issues that arise out of this initially flawed strategy and they certainly warrant further discussions. Did Saddam Hussein make some miscalculated assumptions about his Iranian adversaries when applying his limited war concept? Did he underestimate the skill and determination by which his Iranian adversaries would respond? Finally, when Saddam Hussein attempted to change his military objectives during the conflict, did he properly address the issues of costs, benefits, and risks with regards to his overall national strategy? In answering these questions, we hope some enlightenment can be revealed concerning the numerous military lessons that were learned and re-learned during the eight year long Iran-Iraq war; a war that proved to be one of the bloodiest Third World conflicts in the late 20th Century.

MILITARY OBJECTIVES

When Saddam Hussein unleashed his military forces in a lightning quick move to secure the western Iran territories of Khuzestan and the Shatt al-Arab waterway, he had three very simple aspirations for his Iraqi Baathist party regime. First and foremost, he had an intense

desire to contain the rapidly spreading Islamic revolution and prevent it from toppling his ruling Sunni government. Secondary was his interest in changing the regional balance of power in the Arabian Gulf region with Iraq emerging as the new champion of the Arab world. These two political objectives have been previously discussed, but what is puzzling is that in both instances, the military objectives did not match the desired political effect. Saddam Hussein wanted his invasion of western Iran to be a quick and decisive resolution where his country, military forces, and government would not be subjected to a drawn out general war. In support of his objectives, he directed that the campaign be carried out in a restricted manner where only Iranian military targets were attacked and no civilian or high value economic targets were punished. He even went so far as to commit only five of his available twelve-army divisions in the initial campaign. After utilizing this successful approach during the first seven days of the war, he halted his forces in the belief that peace with Tehran could be negotiated. What he failed to identify properly and therefore severely miscalculated, were the strategic centers of gravity that would support his strategy. By taking control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway and the oil rich province of Khuzestan in western Iran, Saddam Hussein felt he would gain the leverage from which to negotiate an advantageous peace. In a flawed assumption, however, he quickly discovered that his identification of a few valuable operational centers of gravity certainly did not make his strategic vision whole. What he actually accomplished, along with his success in maintaining air superiority over the battlefield, was a dramatic string of initial victories that served to infuriate the revolutionary regime of Ayatollah Khomeini making Iran more determined to strike back at the Baathist party government. Had Hussein been more cognizant of history and its connection to revolutionary regimes, he might have better understood the fury that tends to come from within a rebellion. Not only did his attack against the Iranian heartland enable Khomeini to

channel his country's religious and nationalistic energies into an external cause, but it also helped him to immediately legitimize his government and purge any remaining opposition that still harbored within Iran. If Saddam Hussein had accurately identified the real strategic centers of gravity for this conflict, as the fervent will of the Iranian people and Ayatollah Khomeini, the spiritual architect of their cause, he might have devised a drastically different military strategy in support of his political objectives. As it was, his severe miscalculation in determining the correct Iranian centers of gravity created exactly what Saddam Hussein did not want, a protracted general war that drained the very critical resources he had been trying to defend with his limited war campaign.

MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND VULNERABILITIES

At the onset of the Iran-Iraq War, the military forces that were at the disposal of the Hussein and Khomeini regimes looked statistically similar. The total numbers of both armed forces averaged in the 240,000 range and the aircraft, tanks, artillery pieces, and paramilitary forces were also reasonably close in terms of static numbers. It should be noted, however, that the overall Iranian population had a tremendous advantage in total bodies with a three to one ratio in available manpower. What these static figures did not reveal to the novice eye was that Iran had suffered a very debilitating loss of its qualified military leaders during the Khomeini rise to power in 1979. During this volatile period, many of the "unreliable elements within the Iranian armed services were purged to ensure a successful continuation of the Islamic revolution."⁸ Those remaining in the service were typically officers and enlisted personnel with very limited combat experience. The large number of troops that had received first hand combat

⁸ Staudenmaier, William O. *A Strategic Analysis* in **The Iran-Iraq War: New Weapons, Old Conflicts** edited by Shirin Tahir-Kheli and Shaheen Ayubi (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983) p. 30.

experience during the “Iranian Dhofar Rebellion operations in the 1970’s tended to be the ones that were purged quickly in 1979-1980.”⁹ Other aspects of the Iranian armed forces also in desperate need of revitalization surrounded the concepts of training, logistics, and Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence (C4I). Here, the need to muster a large revolutionary army rapidly modernizing its equipment made the task of adequately training its personnel very daunting. By combining the vulnerability of a poorly trained force with the challenges of typical logistical shortfalls, the Iranian Air Force could, at best, maintain a 50% operational rate for its fixed wing and helicopter units. As many Westerners proclaimed during early stages of the war, “estimates of Iran’s ability to operate its sophisticated weapon systems were uniformly and justifiably pessimistic.”¹⁰ Based on these realities, the potential for initial Iranian failure on the battlefield was quite real.

The new Iranian government’s ability to control its newfound revolutionary armed forces was also a topic of major concern. With the rise of Khomeini, a significant split developed between the regular armed forces and that of the newly created revolutionary guard militia. The Pasdaran, or revolutionary guard, was formed to protect the revolution from the politically unreliable regular military. This organizational split, however, resulted in considerable confusion in the realm of C4I and severely degraded the Iranian armed forces ability to carry out operations in a joint and cohesive manner.

The heart of the Iranian military’s ability to conduct successful operations during the eight-year war was found in the religious fervor and nationalistic feeling that presided over the

⁹ Staudenmaier, William O. *A Strategic Analysis in The Iran-Iraq War: New Weapons, Old Conflicts* edited by Shirin Tahir-Kheli and Shaheen Ayubi (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983) p. 31.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 31.

entire Iranian homeland and its people. Tehran was able to endure this long and costly war because its people were willing to sacrifice greatly for the honor of defending the righteous Islamic Revolution. For the Iranian people and its military, suffering in the spirit of Islam was a glorious way to ensure entrance into the heavens. In a sign of true faith, “those who died in the path of God were martyrs, not casualties.”¹¹ For the Iranian armed forces, however, this overwhelming religious devotion to the revolution eventually lost its advantage as the war continued for eight long years. Although Iranian tactics were initially based on blind fervor and large frontal assaults, the military gradually reduced their reliance on such assaults in the later years.

The Iraqi armed forces also had some dynamic asymmetries in their initial military order of battle. The Iraqi’s believed that their higher quality armored and mechanized divisions would be successful against their Iranian adversaries. Like the Iranians, however, they also had their limitations in terms of leadership and training. While the Iraqi military had been through many recent operations, including the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the Northern Iraq Kurdish counterinsurgency campaigns, their officer corps still tended to be an over politicized organization where commanders and captains were chosen more for political loyalty than military competence. The Iraqi military was also undergoing a vast force expansion plan and modernization program and its difficulties in adequately training its unskilled personnel were considerable, although certainly not to the degree seen in the Iranian military. Two areas they did have distinct advantages over their Shiite adversaries were in the fields of logistics and C4I. At the onset of the war, many “Western military analysts believed the Iraqi’s to be very capable of maintaining and operating their modern equipment bought from Soviet and Western

¹¹ Karsh, Efraim, “Military Lessons of the Iran-Iraq War,” **Orbis**, (Spring 1989) p. 213.

sources.”¹² Additionally, the Iraqi command and control system did not suffer the dramatic lack of cohesiveness witnessed on the Iranian side. As commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Saddam Hussein was able to effectively control his military’s strategic capabilities, even if they were often times used unwisely. As a result, the Iraqi military was much better prepared for the initiation of an Iran-Iraq conflict and this advantage was carried over into the first few months of the war.

MILITARY STRATEGIC CONCEPT

Saddam Hussein’s military strategic concept during the eight-year Iran-Iraq War can be broken down into three distinct periods. At the onset of war and during the first few months of fighting, Iraq pursued a decisive limited campaign that was designed to convince Khomeini’s revolutionary regime to stop in its attempts to overthrow the Hussein Sunni government and agree to a quick negotiated peace. In the second phase of the conflict, Saddam Hussein adopted a new military strategy that centered on the concept of static defense. Here, the idea of victory and limited offense evaporated into a long drawn out war of survival or attrition. No longer were the Iraqi armed forces in a position to attack in lightning fast maneuvers. Now, they were in a period of extreme defense where the very heartland of Iraq, in places like Basra, was under constant attack. The third and most strategic of the three periods can be identified as the Iraqi strategic bombing phase. During this period, “the Iraqi authorities, knowing that they did not possess the manpower reserves available to Iran, sought to gain a crucial edge through the

¹² Staudenmaier, William O. *A Strategic Analysis in The Iran-Iraq War: New Weapons, Old Conflicts* edited by Shirin Tahir-Kheli and Shaheen Ayubi (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983) p. 31.

quality of weaponry at their disposal.”¹³ By striking the Iranian people in the rear at strategic centers like oil installations and large cities, the Iraqi’s hoped to break the Iranian’s will to fight and force a brokered UN resolution, SCR 598, which called for an immediate cease fire by both sides.

As discussed previously, Saddam’s initial limited campaign to pursue a quickly negotiated peace was filled with many flawed assumptions concerning his adversary. First and foremost, the defeat of his early military strategy was due primarily to his critical miscalculation concerning the Iranian capability to fight. Yes, it did appear that Hussein had strategically considered his country’s limited resources when he engaged the Iranians in the September 1980 invasion. But what he failed to do in this strategy was understand the tremendous will to fight and the skill with which the Iranian people would defend their homeland. Saddam Hussein had effectively scripted what he thought was an Iraqi military campaign designed to perfectly match his country’s political objectives. Unfortunately, (for the Baathist ruling party), their greatest miscalculation was in the belief that a limited war campaign would actually persuade a fervent and growing nationalistic Islamic revolution to desist in its attempts at overthrowing the Iraqi government. As has been historically documented in conflicts such as the French Revolution, Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan, it is always unwise and quite costly to initiate a limited war against a country in revolution.

When analyzing the second phase of Saddam Hussein’s military strategy in the eight-year war, it is important to understand that he developed this second strategy not by some creative

¹³ Robbins, Phillip, *Iraq in the Gulf War: Objectives, Strategies, and Problems*, Chapter 5 in Hanns W. Maull and Otto Pick, [The Gulf War: Regional and International Dimensions](#) (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988) p. 52.

thought process, but instead by a pure survival instinct for his nation. By the time January 1981 had arrived, the Iranians were already on the counteroffensive and this trend continued for the next seven years in varying degrees. During this period and despite Iraqi successes in developing tactically proficient killing zones of Iranian armor and infantry, the huge Iranian advantage in military manpower started to take its toll. Iran's ability to completely galvanize its nation behind the conflict and to ensure total domination in the ability to mobilize its army quickly left Hussein with no other option than to adopt a static defense strategy. To Hussein's credit, it appears that in 1981 he correctly ascertained that a protracted general war was inevitable so he resorted to a dug in defense that would reduce his own country's casualties and at the same time wear down the Iranians through attrition. To reinforce the effectiveness of this strategy, the Iranian military and its politically oriented revolutionary guard were content on sending wave after wave of frontal assaults to strengthen their offensive thrust against Iraq. While this Iranian strategy of massive armies of infantry appeared to be sustainable in the early and middle stages of the conflict, it is important to realize that even Iran's huge population base was not sufficient to support this strategy for the duration of the war.

The third modification of Saddam Hussein's military strategy can best be identified as the Iraqi strategic bombing period. During this phase, the military strategy was changed to adopt a new policy emphasizing the infliction of pain directly on the Iranian people. It is apparent that while Saddam was not initially overwhelmed with the idea of using strategic bombing against civilian targets he did fully comprehend that his nation's resources were poorly matched for a long defensive general war. He felt something had to be done to change the status quo. Additionally, while it cannot be proved conclusively that Hussein outwardly decided to apply Clausewitz's "paradoxical trinity" to his military strategy it does appear that it had considerable

play in the final modification. Now, the Iranian people and the Tehran government were going to feel the total force of war. This strategy of bringing the horrors of war to the Iranian homes had a tremendous impact on ending the conflict.

The Iraqi Air Force had always maintained air superiority throughout the war and it had also launched a successful Tanker War campaign starting in early 1984. However, it was not until the August 1986 air raid against the Iranian oil terminal at Sirri Island, near the Straits of Hormuz that the Iranian people really started to feel the brunt of the strategic bombing campaign. Following these raids, Iran's economic heartbeat, its oil export revenues came under severe jeopardy and the hardships that followed had a debilitating effect on the Iranian war effort. To further undermine the Iranian people's will to continue the exhausting war, Hussein also determined that the use of chemical weapons, while not used in extensive numbers, could strike fear in the hearts of the Iranian adversaries. By late 1987, he also had developed the missile technology capable of striking long-range targets such as the capital city of Tehran. As a result, he established a qualitative edge in military capabilities and this time the effects had the muscle to break the most critical Iranian strategic center of gravity, its will to fight. "Between February and late April of 1988, Iraq fired over 120 missiles into Tehran, Isfahan, and even into the Shias' holy city of Qom; no place in Iran was safe from missile attack."¹⁴ This proclaimed War of the Cities and its accompanying attacks against other economic installations and oil refineries, was ultimately what paved the way for the collapse of Iranian morale and its acceptance of the war's true futility. In adopting this new more Clausewitzian doctrine of military strategy, Hussein had accomplished what he could not do in the previous eight years of battle, he had compelled the

¹⁴ Antal, John, F., "The Iraqi Army Forged in the Gulf War," Military Review, (February 1991) p. 67.

Ayatollah Khomeini to end the fighting and resist in his further attempts at overthrowing the Iraqi regime.

When the war ended in a cease-fire on 8 August 1988, Saddam Hussein claimed victory. The successes that Iraq had exhibited during the last year of the war gave his claim some credibility. However, Saddam had built up great debts to his neighboring states in the Gulf region. The Ayatollah Khomeini and his regime in Iran were actually more stable and powerful at the end of the war than it was before Saddam invaded. The nations who had loaned resources to Iraq during the war were not going to forgive them. These same nations also supported Kuwait concerning lands that were in question near the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab. After 8 long years of devastating fighting, Saddam did not realize many of the gains he had anticipated. He did manage to focus Shiite attention on the war and away from a revolutionary overthrow of his Sunni presidency. However, he was unsuccessful in gaining the hegemonic status he desired.

In conclusion, we cannot support the concept that Saddam Hussein had carefully utilized all of the principles of statecraft before resorting to a war of last resort. Instead he focused on war due to his natural tendencies to solve everything with violence. Saddam Hussein's fear of Iran and its Shiite Revolution drove him to engage the Iranian Government in a miscalculated limited war designed to stop further Shiite ambitions against his regime. By not fully utilizing all of the options of statecraft, he was forced to rely solely on the military instruments of power, which proved to be incompatible with a limited style campaign against a revolutionary adversary.

His subsequent use of military force in Kuwait met with similar results. However, he still remains in power.

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